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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



[*The Editor is not responsible for opinions expressed in this department.*]

[LETTERS to the editor must be accompanied by the name in full and address of the writer, otherwise such communications cannot be recognized. The name need not appear in the JOURNAL unless so desired.—Ed.]

DEAR EDITOR: I would like to ask some of the women who have been engaged in private nursing for many years to tell me through the pages of your JOURNAL what it is customary for nurses to do in regard to the washing of diapers and the baby's flannels; also if it is considered good form for a nurse to take the baby out in the carriage and wheel it up and down on the street, and if so whether or not she shall wear her uniform?

There seems to be a great difference of opinion among the younger women in regard to these questions, but the nurses who have been doing obstetrical work for years must have settled these problems for themselves upon some satisfactory lines.

I am presupposing that the people are in liberal circumstances and are not restricted financially from having all the service necessary.

YEARLING.

This writer asks practical questions and it would be interesting to know the custom in different cities in regard to these matters.—Ed.

DEAR EDITOR: The question of the very meagre response to the call for nurses for the Volunteer Corps of the Army has been raised several times, in the JOURNAL's pages during the past few months.

Still there seems no understanding of our seeming apathy to this responsibility, and we remain stigmatized as unpatriotic and selfish, neither of which adjectives anyone believes justly applicable to the nurses of the United States.

I am, therefore, led to write you my experience in this matter, as a possible explanation.

When the appeal was first made, in 1904, I had been at work only six months since a prolonged illness and felt myself physically unfitted to answer the appeal. In May, 1905, when the appeal was again heard at the convention in Washington, many were stirred to offer their services.

Great stress was then laid upon the importance of the indorsement of one's superintendent. Naturally some physical examination was expected, though no mention was made of it at that time. So, having my superintendent's unqualified recommendation and emboldened by another year of good health, under constant private duty, I applied for the necessary papers, and was entirely unprepared for and discouraged by the rigid physical examination required.

However I persevered to ask a physician for his certificate, which he refused, saying he could not conscientiously say of any nurse that she had the "necessary strength and endurance" for "duty in camp or hospital, in any climate," as the certificate requires. This physician has had a wide experience with nurses, both as coworkers and patients.

A second physician refused on the same grounds, but a third was willing to sign, making a note as to a slight physical disability. Upon receipt of my application at the Surgeon General's office, I was notified that my "physical condition would seem to disqualify me for the service."

Though of proven endurance, I am not of robust physique and was not surprised at my decree, and it is not my purpose to question it or the wisdom of accepting only those who seem best suited for the work; but I would ask the following questions suggested by my experience:

1st. Are there not other nurses who, like myself, heard the call in 1904, but felt physically unfitted to make a response? 2d. Having applied for papers, were others discouraged by the strict physical requirements and did not proceed further? 3d. Having been refused a certificate by a physician, who felt that the Army asked more than he could conscientiously subscribe to, did not persevere to ask a second and third? 4th. Having executed and forwarded their papers, were refused for physical reasons, and find their applications unrecognized by the report of the Volunteer Corps? For Mrs. Kinney has published in the *JOURNAL*, over her name, that only one applicant has been refused and she had not her superintendent's indorsement.

Is it not possible that some one of the above reasons may be given for the absence of many names from the roll of volunteers, and not the indifference to duty and lack of patriotism that has been commented upon so freely?

GRADUATE.

DEAR EDITOR: On January 7, the members of the Guild of St. Barnabas for Nurses of the New York Branch and their friends were invited to St. Thomas' Church for a "Musical Hour." The music consisting of tenor and soprano solos and several organ selections, was greatly appreciated by all present.

It is proposed to give an interesting "Hour" of music, literature, or otherwise the last Sunday of every month at 8, P.M., at the above church, and it is hoped that all nurses will take advantage of these "Hours."

It really seems as if there ought to be more interest displayed by nurses toward the Guild considering the great number in our city, and the benefit derived therefrom.

M. E. B., R. N.

DEAR EDITOR: I am wondering how many nurses who have the right to use the prefix R. N. take every opportunity to do so and to impress its meaning upon the intelligent people whom they meet.

Where a nurse is really sincere in her work, putting into it her best conscientious effort and yet is not successful, I believe it is because she is not business-like in her methods. In the matter of business cards alone many excellent nurses are very careless. When a nurse leaves a family and is asked to leave her address, she is often at a loss to know just where to put her hand on her

cards—whether in a packed-up suit-case, in a pocket of the cover or with her stationery, and perhaps after turning everything out she finds she has left them behind. An address written on a slip of paper is easily lost and when a nurse is needed again perhaps the only person who knew the address is the patient, and regretting that the nurse they had before cannot be reached a stranger has to be called in her place.

Cards should always be carried in a convenient pocket-book or bag and always in the *same* place. These cards should give all the information necessary, so that they would be equally valuable if a nurse found herself far from her home centre. Below the name to the right should be the telephone number; below it the street, below it the town, and below it the state. In the lower left-hand corner should be R. N. and the state,—for instance, R. N. Indiana. The school from which she graduated could be added but the R. N. takes the place of that, as the right to use it insures proper professional training.

This is only one of the many business details about which nurses are as a class careless, but it has become doubly important since in so many states the legislature has created a means of distinction between the “trained” and the “untrained” who make up the great nursing body of the country.

MEMPHIS.

UNITED STATES ARMY GENERAL HOSPITAL, PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.,

February 14, 1906.

DEAR EDITOR: As to whether the state of affairs, as described in Miss Hudson's communication, published in your last issue, still exists in the Army Nurse Corps, I can answer most emphatically, “No.”

Everyone concedes that conditions in 1898-1899 were not what they should be. Since then, however, seven years have passed and the U. S. Army General Hospital to-day is up to date in every particular.

I have been in the service since April, 1902, nearly four years, and in that time I have never once experienced the slightest lack of courtesy from the army officials with whom I have come in contact.

In the course of my nursing experience, I have found that nurses who give satisfaction have little of which to complain, as regard their personal treatment.

Very respectfully,

DORA E. THOMPSON,

Chief Nurse, Army Nurse Corps.